

**A STRATEGY
TO ADDRESS
PARKING AND TRAFFIC
CONGESTION
IN
DOWNTOWN NANTUCKET**

**Submitted to the Board of Selectmen
on
December 28, 1998
by the**

Downtown Parking and Congestion Work Group

Established Pursuant to Article 53 of the 1998 Annual Town Meeting

DOWNTOWN PARKING AND CONGESTION WORK GROUP

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A Strategy To Address Parking and Traffic Congestion In Downtown Nantucket

Background

The Downtown Parking and Congestion Work Group (“Work Group”) was appointed by the Nantucket Board of Selectmen as authorized by Article 53 of the 1998 Annual Town Meeting. That article, entitled: “Bylaw Amendment: Parking”, as presented in the warrant, proposed a medallion system as a means to limit automobiles in the Downtown and within the Core District. The article was amended on the floor of Town Meeting, and approved by acclamation, to require the establishment of a Work Group to develop a strategy addressing parking and traffic congestion in the Downtown, required to be submitted no later than December 31, 1998. The amendment also authorizes the Selectmen, after public hearing, to implement the strategy by adopting regulations (see Appendix “A”).

The Work Group met on eight (8) occasions during the months of November and December, 1998. (The Work Group is grateful to both the Nantucket Athenaeum and the Nantucket Land Bank for the use of their respective meeting rooms.)

The Work Group considered the substantial research and background materials which currently exist on the subject of parking, traffic congestion, and transportation affecting the Downtown. Those references are listed in Appendix “B”.

Based on its review of past efforts documented in the reference materials, the Work Group reached an early conclusion that the Downtown traffic congestion and parking issues, and many of the solutions, are by no means new. Many of these solutions have suffered the fate of many goals on Nantucket – lack of implementation. The Work Group has taken a fresh look at these old solutions, and in some cases, has recommended some new and innovative means to address these issues, relying on the collective personal and professional knowledge and experience of this diverse Work Group. One important conclusion was reached at the outset – **there is no one magic bullet to solve the problems in the Downtown; rather, there is a series of strategies which, taken collectively, can ameliorate (but not eliminate) these problems.**

The Work Group is recommending a series of tasks which require Board of Selectmen action, some of which will be politically unpopular, and others will require funding to implement. Other initiatives are recommended to be taken by entities not under the direct control of the Town. Unless action is taken, yet another group or committee will be formed in the future in reaction to increased congestion, making the same familiar recommendations.

History / Current Issues

The Downtown has evolved from a once-thriving commercial center supporting a year-round economy in the early-to mid-nineteenth century to a downtown supporting a seasonal tourist economy. Downtown now is the principal place where an estimated peak tourist population of at least 40,000 shops, dines, attends social engagements and cultural events, and gains access to the Harbor for water-based recreational opportunities. Each year, the year-round population relies less and less on the Downtown for its basic necessities. Further, the Downtown is not the place where the vast majority of seasonal residents and long-term visitors reside.

Statistics prepared by the Nantucket Planning and Economic Development Commission suggest that nearly all seasonal residents and long-term visitors are housed in nearly 80% of the total housing units found on the Island. Most of these units have been constructed since zoning was established in 1972 – zoning which has encouraged the siting of these units throughout the Island in a largely dispersed, auto-dependent pattern. The connection between these two facts – Downtown as a major destination for a variety of activities during the peak tourist season, and the auto-dependent patterns of seasonal housing – accounts for the issues which led to this report – the continuing traffic congestion in the Downtown.

Simply put, people accessing the Downtown must employ some form of transportation, other than their feet, to get there. In many cases, the vehicle of choice is the automobile. Compounding the problem is the fact that the Downtown also serves as the sole port of entry for water based transportation – including the sole port for the transport of automobiles coming to and from the Island. This through-traffic must traverse the same narrow, pedestrian-oriented Downtown streets that visitors, merchants, and employees use on a daily basis, while trucks transporting goods to the Island attempt to deliver their goods within narrow, congested streets during peak periods. Despite the establishment of a transit system to help alleviate downtown congestion, many employees and visitors still take their vehicles to the Downtown, competing for the limited parking available. The end result is a swirl of automobile, truck, bicycle, moped, and pedestrian traffic, competing for the same limited space.

The Work Group acknowledges that a reduction of the number of cars on the Island would have a substantial impact on congestion in the Downtown. Upon receipt of a report concerning the legality of limiting automobiles on the Island now being prepared by Attorney Edith Netter (and not available by this deadline), the Work Group will meet to decide whether the conclusions of that report merit submittal of a modification or addendum to this report. However, it feels that, in any event, managing the many

variables which contribute to the problem collectively can have a substantial positive effect. That is the nature of this strategy.

Before solutions could be discussed, the Work Group required an understanding of the problems. The following specific issues were identified early in the Work Group planning process:

A. Parking

- Merchants, employees, and Town employees continue to take up parking spaces in the Downtown, thus reducing the supply available to customers, and reducing turnover.
- Downtown parking problems are not limited to the daytime, when enforcement is in effect. The evening may experience more congestion and parking scarcity than the daytime.
- Inclement weather exacerbates parking problems, as shuttle usage is reduced in favor of the automobile, and would-be beach-goers are attracted to the Downtown.
- Delivery trucks inhibit parking turnover by blocking or otherwise inhibiting traffic.
- People often park illegally in loading zones, thus encouraging illegally loading activities.
- The numbers of Parking Enforcement Officers are at times insufficient to adequately enforce parking restrictions.
- Property owners with resident parking permits and off street parking spaces often park in the street, thus taking up valuable public parking.

B. Traffic Flows / Congestion

- Uncontrolled delivery activities inhibit or block traffic flow.
- The Police Department is understaffed to adequately direct traffic flows.
- Moped and bicycle rental activities on Lower Broad Street inhibit traffic flows.
- Truck traffic occasionally strays onto minor roads in the Downtown, inhibiting traffic flows.

- Oversized buses occasionally use Downtown streets illegally, and inhibit flows at times when they are not able to negotiate turns.
- General congestion occurs at the Steamship Authority dock due to its bottleneck configuration, volumes of traffic, and diverse modes of traffic, compounded by activities by merchants on Lower Broad Street.

C. Specific Delivery / Loading Zone Issues

- UPS trucks often park illegally, i.e., not in designated loading zones.
- No limitation exists on the time that deliveries can be made in the Downtown.
- Steamship Authority schedules are not conducive to restricting delivery times because of restrictions imposed by Barnstable on freight boat schedules.

D. Alternative Transportation Modes

1. Nantucket Regional Transit Authority (“NRTA”)

- Despite great progress in forming and expanding shuttle routes, NRTA routes are limited in some areas.
- Headways (i.e., waiting times between buses) in some instances are long, and hours of operation are limited for the beach routes.
- Participation in shuttle programs by employers and their employees is inadequate.
- More shuttle shelters and benches are needed at stops.

2. Taxis

- Lack of central dispatching by the majority of taxi owners inhibits the efficiency and effectiveness of taxi service.

3. Tour vehicles

- Tour van activities cause congestion and take up needed parking on Federal Street near Visitor Services.

4. Hotel Vans

- The system of hotel vans managed by individual lodging establishments reduce auto-dependency in the Downtown, and should be expanded.

5. Bicycles

- Bicyclists often violate the rules of the road (i.e., travelling the wrong way on one-way streets)

6. Pedestrians

- Pedestrians who jaywalk constantly inhibit traffic flows on main roads.

General Goals

- ✓ Create a less congested Downtown core in keeping with Nantucket's historic character and pedestrian-orientation.
- ✓ Increase the availability of, and turnover of, existing parking spaces in the Downtown for the benefit of the Island economy, while at the same time discouraging automobile usage.
- ✓ Reduce dependence on the use of the automobile to access the Downtown by enhancing and expanding transportation alternatives and programs.
- ✓ Aggressively expand the marketing of transportation alternatives (i.e., alternatives to the automobile).
- ✓ Reduce congestion in the Downtown, and the conflicts between the different modes of transportation, through management, scheduling, regulation, and aggressive enforcement.

Downtown Transportation Action Plan

Letters in bold represent actions to be initiated by the following entities:

BOS – Nantucket Board of Selectmen / County Commissioners

NPD – Nantucket Police Department

CoC – Chamber of Commerce

NRA – Nantucket Restaurant Association

NMA – Nantucket Merchants Association

NAREB – Nantucket Association of Real Estate Brokers

I&M – Inquirer & Mirror

NRTA – Nantucket Regional Transit Authority

TX – Taxi Association

SSA – Steamship Authority

DPW – Nantucket Department of Public Works

NP&EDC – Nantucket Planning and Economic Development Commission

VS – Visitor Services

BIC - Bicycle Shops

- ❑ Adopt a “zero tolerance” policy in the enforcement of parking regulations in the Core District during peak periods. **(BOS, NPD)**
- ❑ The Chamber of Commerce should take a more aggressive role in promoting to its membership and their employees the use of alternative modes of transportation as alternatives to the automobile, especially the NRTA’s seasonal shuttle system. **(CoC)**
- ❑ Establish a “Violator of the Week” Program, in cooperation with the I&M, to call attention to scofflaws. **(NPD, I&M)**
- ❑ In cooperation with the Chamber of Commerce, establish a program, to encourage restaurants to entice potential patrons, at the time meal reservations are made, to use taxis or the NRTA shuttle system to dine in the Downtown. **(CoC, NRTA, TX)**
- ❑ Expand the hours of operation for the NRTA’s “beach buses” so that they also serve as general bus routes servicing locations in, and at the fringe of, the Downtown. This expansion will encourage more use of the shuttle system by employers, employees, and patrons. **(NRTA)**
- ❑ Shorten headways and the length of the Miacomet Loop by eliminating portions of the Loop which overlap other routes. Shortening headways promotes a more efficient and convenient shuttle service to the Downtown. **(NRTA)**
- ❑ Restructure the ‘Sconset Route by creating two routes, without increasing the numbers of buses – a ‘Sconset-only route, and a new Old South Loop which includes a stop at the Nantucket Inn on Macy Lane. This latter loop will significantly decrease headways between Old South Road and the Downtown. **(NRTA)**
- ❑ Enhance, expand, and more aggressively market the NRTA’s “Commuter Solution” and “Shuttle Shopper” programs. **(NRTA)**
- ❑ Establish a “Shuttle Club” to acknowledge businesses which participate in the NRTA’s “Commuter Solution” and “Shuttle Shopper” programs. **(NRTA)**
- ❑ Promote the use of NRTA Park and Ride lots to access the Downtown as an alternative to Island residents and visitors who are removed from existing shuttle routes, and as an alternative to the use of the Washington Street Parking lot, which is over-utilized. **(NRTA, CoC)**

- ❑ Encourage the Steamship Authority to use whatever means it has at its disposal, with the support of the Board of Selectmen and the Chamber of Commerce, to schedule early freight boat(s), to enable early truck deliveries in the Downtown. **(SSA, BOS, CoC)**
- ❑ Establish and enforce strict delivery times for delivery vehicles (between 6AM and 11 AM). Provide additional “flex loading / parking zones” as an incentive, which zones will revert to exclusive parking zones after 11 AM. Reduce the time period to 10AM, in the event that the Steamship Authority is able to establish an early morning freight service. **(BOS, NPD)**
- ❑ Provide other areas for loading and unloading, such as dedicating all or a portion of specific side streets for this purpose (i.e., Cambridge Street, from Federal to South Water Street. **(BOS)**
- ❑ Revise the Town Bylaw to allow exceptions to the prohibition of delivery trucks in the Downtown outside of designated times for Downtown parcel pick-ups, provided dedicated loading zones at select locations are utilized. Hand trucks can be used to pick up packages from these central locations. Otherwise, individual site pick-ups which require blocking traffic are prohibited. **(BOS)**
- ❑ Strictly enforce the Bylaw regulating loading zones. **(NPD)**
- ❑ Hire additional Parking Enforcement and Traffic Control Officers. Seek funding for these Officers from public and private sources, such as the Chamber of Commerce and the Merchants Association. **(BOS, CoC)**
- ❑ Regulate pedestrian traffic flows by enacting and enforcing a Bylaw prohibiting jaywalking. **(BOS, NPD)**
- ❑ Install a system of bollards and chains / rails (consistent with HDC guidelines) between the sidewalk and the roadway at Lower Broad Street, and at the corner of Main Street, Washington Street, and South Water Street, in order to confine pedestrian traffic to sidewalks and direct them to designated crosswalks. **(BOS, DPW)**
- ❑ Enforce the existing Town Bylaw regulating the display of merchandise and wares within a public right-of-way, to better manage congestion on the Lower Broad Street. **(BOS, NPD)**
- ❑ Create and distribute truck route maps for Downtown Nantucket to all truck drivers when they board the Steamship in Hyannis; ask Steamship Authority to add the following phrase (or words to this effect) to their normal “call to drivers” as the boats approach Nantucket Harbor: “Truck drivers are reminded to follow designated truck routes when they disembark on Nantucket”. **(NP&EDC, VS, SSA)**

- ❑ Change the Steamship Authority schedules to create more time between arrivals and departures of the various boats which access the Steamship Wharf. Converging arrivals and departures compound congestion. **(BOS, SSA)**
- ❑ Renew talks with the Steamship Authority towards the creation of a mutual strategy to ameliorate congestion both at the Steamship Authority and Lower Broad Street. **(BOS, SSA)**
- ❑ In accordance with a letter submitted by Nantucket's Steamship Authority representative Grace Grossman, develop a strategy to establish a dolly freight system to better transport baggage to and from Nantucket. **(NP&EDC, BOS, SSA)**
- ❑ Strictly enforce the Town's bylaw regulating tour buses. **(BOS, NPD)**
- ❑ Encourage taxi owners to establish and utilize central dispatching to enhance the efficiency of taxi service; encourage the start-up of private dispatching businesses or co-ops. **(NP&EDC, TX)**
- ❑ Remove the tour van space fronting on Visitor Services, and move the space to candle and Main Street, sharing that space with the taxis. **(BOS)**
- ❑ Encourage tour providers to utilize tour vans in lieu of tour buses. **(NP&EDC, BOS, CoC)**
- ❑ Encourage the Island's lodging establishments to expand the numbers and use of hotel vans as a means of reducing the need to use automobiles in the Downtown. **(NP&EDC, BOS, CoC)**
- ❑ Bicycle shops should improve their education of customers renting bicycles concerning the rules of the road. **(CoC, BIC)**
- ❑ More aggressively enforce the rules of the road applicable to bicyclists. **(BOS, NPD)**
- ❑ Create an In-Town Bike route which safely conveys pedestrians and bicyclists between the Wharf and the Rotary. **(BOS, NP&EDC)**

Appendix A

ARTICLE 53

(Bylaw Amendment: Parking)

To see if the Town will vote to amend Chapter 103 (Parking) of the Code of the Town of Nantucket by adding a new Article IV "Summer Parking Limitations" as follows:

103-13. The purpose of this Article is to provide for limitations on automobile usage in a "delineated area," initially to be defined under Article II, so as to ensure passage of emergency vehicles, commercial vehicles and public transportation vehicles, without undue obstruction.

103-14. The Board of Selectmen shall prescribe regulations that implement the intent of this section consistent with the following conditions:

- A. The Board of Selectmen shall hold a public hearing and allow for oral and written comment with regard to implementation of these regulations prior to the required implementation date of January 1, 1999.

These regulations may be modified after initial adoption consistent with the intent of this section.

- B. Between 12:01 am on the Wednesday preceding the Fourth of July and 11:59 pm on the Wednesday preceding Labor Day, no motor vehicle shall park within the Resident Parking Permit District unless it is prominently displaying a medallion issued by the Town.

- C. Medallions will be issued annually, by the Police Department, for a fee to be determined, according to the following:

- 1. Any year-round residence owner, as evidenced by a real estate tax bill showing the residential exemption, shall be issued one medallion for each automobile or light truck registered on Nantucket, subject only to the limitation that the number of medallions issued for any residence shall not exceed two (2) or the number of valid driver's licenses issued to persons residing on a year-round basis at that address, whichever is greater.

- 2. Any non-year-round residence owner shall be issued a maximum of two (2) medallions.

- 3. Any person residing in Nantucket on a year-round basis, as evidenced by their Massachusetts driver's license, showing a Nantucket address, shall be issued a maximum of one (1) medallion for a vehicle registered on Nantucket.

4. Commercial vehicles (excluding cars and light trucks), emergency vehicles, all vehicles licensed by the Department of Public Utilities, NRTA vehicles and all official Town of Nantucket vehicles shall be exempt from the provisions of this section.

5. Medallions will be numbered and a register will be maintained containing the number of each medallion issued as well as the name of the individual to whom it is issued and the corresponding address.

6. Medallions shall be transferable by the holder thereof, either on a temporary or permanent basis between vehicles.

103-15.

- A. This regulation shall be enforced by the Nantucket Police Department.

- B. Violators will be fined \$100 for each violation; each use of a vehicle in the Resident Parking Permit District without a medallion shall constitute a separate offense

- C. Theft of a medallion shall be punishable by a fine of \$300.

- D. This regulation may be enforced by non-criminal disposition pursuant to section 1-1 of the Code.

(Board of Selectmen for Bruce D. Miller)

FINANCE COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION: We recommend that the Town vote to adopt Article 53 with the following amendment:

Amend the proposed section 103-14B by adding the following new language:

The Board of Selectmen shall notify and warn the residents and visitors of this requirement by installing appropriate signage.

Background Reference Materials

**Goals and Objectives for Balanced Growth
(1990 – NP&EDC)**

**Planning and Implementation for Downtown Parking and Traffic Circulation
(1993 – NP&EDC)**

**Nantucket Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan
(1994 – NP&EDC)**

**Long – Range Transportation Plan – Nantucket, Massachusetts
(1998 – NP&EDC)**

**Traffic Congestion on Nantucket Island: Analysis of Growth Trends, Growth
projections, and Implications for Vehicle Use
(1998 – Nantucket Community Association)
(Reference Only – Not Sponsored or Endorsed by the NP&EDC)**